

art

Diwan Manna's studio and darkroom reveal the large span of his artistic journey, wherein he has conjured magical images by combining varied art disciplines such as photography, painting, acting and the body arts. Diwan seems to be constantly seeking answers, which emerge in his artworks through layers of super-imposed images. Moving within a consciously chosen space, he creates an unusual, hybrid art form by an adroit use of filters and colours.

Born in 1958 at Bareta, Punjab, Diwan Manna studied Graphic Arts and Printmaking at the Government College of Arts, Chandigarh. His first series in black and white was done while still at college. Soon after, a friend who was bringing out a magazine on theatre, asked him to help out as the photo-editor.

Diwan started the process of experimentation very early on in his professional life, playing around with colours and contrasts, making the pictures dramatic, almost theatrical — and then, experimenting further to transform them into poster-like images. As he started refining his techniques, Diwan brought the worlds of hi-tech and traditional imagery closer in his works.

Diwan is an artist of the 21st century, and says he is moved by the phenomenal upsurge of



DIWAN MANNA

TEXT: MRIDULA SHARMA





violence globally in all walks of life — emotional, social and political. His work, which he describes as a 'confluence' of photography, painting, theatre and literature, has grown in the shadow of the political violence over the last decade in his home state.

Diwan Manna has been invited to hold workshops in schools across the UK. He worked with children of eight different schools in the age groups of 7 to 11, and 11 to 16. Using the same techniques he taught them composition, and with them made back-

grounds on story lines developed by them, which they would enact subsequently. His participation in a group show of the South Asian Visual Arts Exhibition at Wolverhampton, led him to be invited for a solo exhibition, which later toured other places.

Diwan was selected to be the artist for the first show at Museum fur Indische Kunst, Berlin, and has also held solo exhibitions in Paris, Berlin and the UK. AIFACS, New Delhi conferred upon him the All India Photography Award for two con-

secutive years — 1995 and 1996. His sensitive handling of colours and dark spaces on the negatives lends his art a quality of emotional depth easy to notice but not quite so easy to fathom. 1996 also brought him the National Academy Award in Photography, by Central Lalit Kala Academy.

As he continues to collect awards and recognition from his admirers, Diwan carries on with his quest for artistic expression of the realities of life: sometimes the mundane, and sometimes arsh. **O**